



## Health Insurance and Access to Care

### About NCHS

CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the Nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions.

Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides a broad perspective to help us understand the population's health, influences on health, and health outcomes.

### Health Insurance and Access to Care

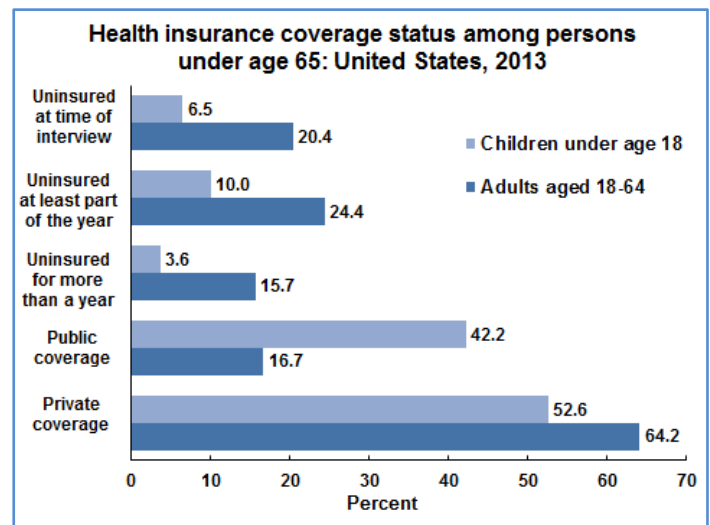
Health insurance coverage is an important determinant of access to health care. Uninsured children and non-elderly adults are substantially less likely to have a usual source of health care or a recent health care visit than their insured counterparts. The majority of persons under age 65 have coverage through private employer-sponsored group health insurance. Private health insurance may also be purchased on an individual basis. Beginning in 2014, private health insurance plans may also be purchased through the Health Insurance Marketplace or state-based exchanges that were established as part of the Affordable Care Act. Public programs such as Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program provide coverage for many low-income children and adults.

NCHS' National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) collects three measures of lack of health insurance coverage: currently uninsured, uninsured at least part of the year, and uninsured for more than a year. Insurance coverage measures are also available for some states. In 2013, NHIS reported state-level estimates of being uninsured at the time of interview, having public coverage, and having private health insurance coverage for 43 states.

### Health Insurance Data

Data from the **National Health Interview Survey** in 2013 show:

- The percentage of **uninsured persons at the time of interview** was 20.4 percent for persons aged 18-64 and 6.5 percent for children under age 18.
- A total of 44.8 million persons of all ages (14.4 percent) were **uninsured at the time of the interview**, 55.4 million (17.8 percent) had been **uninsured for at least part of the year** prior to the interview, and 33.4 million (10.7 percent) had been **uninsured for more than a year** at the time of the interview.
- Among children under age 18, the percentage **uninsured at the time of the interview** decreased from 13.9 percent in 1997 to 6.5 percent in 2013.



SOURCE: National Health Interview Survey, 2013.

- The percentage of **near-poor children without health insurance** at the time of interview decreased from 22.8 percent in 1997 to 10.6 percent in 2013.
- The percentage of **poor children without health insurance** at the time of interview decreased from 22.4 percent in 1997 to 7.8 percent in 2013.



Clinical experts note that with access to timely and appropriate ambulatory care, patients may be able to prevent illness, control acute episodes, or manage chronic conditions to avoid exacerbating or complicating those conditions.

## Health Insurance and Access to Care Data Sources

- **National Health Interview Survey** – Collects information on the Nation’s health through personal household interviews that measure health status and disability, selected conditions, insurance coverage, access to care, use of health services, immunizations, health behaviors, injury, and the ability to perform daily activities. (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>)
- **National Health Care Surveys** – A family of health care provider surveys that together obtain information about the facilities that supply health care, the services rendered, and the characteristics of the patients served. Sites surveyed include: hospitals, office-based physician practices, emergency and outpatient departments, ambulatory surgery centers, nursing homes, and home health and hospice agencies. (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhcs.htm>)

## Office-based Physician Practices

Data from NCHS’ **National Health Care Surveys** can provide insights into access to care. The percentage of physicians accepting new patients – which varies by type of payment – serves as a measure of physician capacity to meet increased demand. Data in 2013 show:

- The majority of physicians (85 percent) reported that they accepted **new patients with private insurance**, compared with 70 percent who accepted **new patients with Medicaid**.
- Twenty-five states had physician acceptance rates for **new Medicaid patients** that were higher than the national average of 70 percent.
- Physician acceptance rates for Medicaid patients were lower than the national average in four states. A previous study using NCHS data found that higher state Medicaid-to-Medicare fee ratios were correlated with greater acceptance of new Medicaid patients.

